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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [OVIP](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [CY](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DASD BRZEZINSKI'S SEPTEMBER 21
VISIT TO TURKEY

REF: A. A) ANKARA 5140

[B](#). B) ANKARA 5115

[C](#). C) ANKARA 5100

[D](#). D) ANKARA 5118

[E](#). E) ANKARA 4915

Classified By: Classified by: Acting DCM Jim Moore. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) Summary: Your visit comes at a challenging time in our bilateral relations. Our painstaking efforts to rebuild relations over the last year, capped by a successful Istanbul NATO Summit in June, have resulted in the restoration of productive relations at the top military and civilian levels and important Turkish contributions to the Global War on Terrorism. Last year Turkey offered troops for Iraq and is scheduled to take over ISAF beginning in February 2005. We cooperated closely on Cyprus, and at Sea Island PM Erdogan agreed to a role for Turkey in the Broader Middle East Initiative. Turkey granted the use of Incirlik Air Base to support refueling missions for OIF and OEF and as an OEF transit hub. However, perceived lack of U.S. action to terminate the PKK/Kongra-Gel presence in Iraq -- especially in light of stepped-up PKK/Kongra-Gel attacks in southeastern Turkey -- or to address a series of Turkish truck driver kidnappings in Iraq has convinced many that the U.S. remains indifferent to the needs of a loyal ally. Turkish public opinion has soured significantly on the U.S., complicating our efforts to expand relations with the civilian leadership and to engage the Government of Turkey (GoT) on Global Defense Posture planning and other efforts in the region. Events in Iraq, such as the recent U.S. action against insurgents in the predominantly Turkmen northern Iraqi city of Talafar create tensions. U.S. military sales have suffered with the cancellation of several tenders and continued demands for terms exceeding the limits of U.S. law, perhaps in part to send business to the EU in hopes of a December vote in favor of beginning the EU harmonization process toward membership. While the Turkish General Staff (TGS) is interested in broadening the scope of our political-military discussion, you should expect to be asked about outstanding DECA issues, Turkey's inclusion in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Core Group and a U.S. contribution to Turkey's Counter-Terrorism Center of Excellence. End Summary.

SETTING

[2](#). (SBU) Political: With a two-thirds majority in parliament, control of a majority of municipalities, and no viable political opposition, PM Erdogan and his AKP government appear firmly in control. AKP's passage of major legal reform packages and constitutional amendments appears to have put Turkey more firmly on track to get an accession process start date from the EU in December, although chronic problems with implementation continue to plague the government. In his meetings with foreign leaders, Erdogan projects confidence, power, and a pragmatism that has seemed to belie his Islamist firebrand past.

[3](#). (C) Yet, while seemingly at the peak of their power, Erdogan, his party, and his government face fundamental political challenges. AKP has not consolidated itself as a party and Erdogan increasingly struggles to impose discipline and direction on the cabinet and parliamentary group. Erdogan's frequent travel interferes with his control of party policy-making and the Cabinet, and he stretches himself thin trying also to oversee Istanbul (he retains an intense interest in the management of the city he dominated as mayor from 1994-98). AKP has not come to grips with the deeply entrenched State bureaucracy or established a solid modus vivendi with the judiciary, armed forces, and presidency. Corruption in the cabinet and AKP's provincial organizations has also become a serious problem. Elements within the Turkish military and other elements of the "secular" establishment continue to assert that AKP intends to undermine Turkey's "secular" structure. These assertions are harder for AKP to refute when various elements in the party try to push neuralgic issues -- the latest being an abortive attempt to re-criminalize adultery and fornication.

[4](#). (U) Economy: The Turkish economy has recovered from the

financial and economic crisis of 2000-2001. However, Turkey's huge debt and structural weaknesses leave it vulnerable to external shocks and necessitate continuation of the IMF program and its accompanying fiscal restraint and structural reform. Large IMF loans -- tied to implementation of ambitious economic reforms -- have enabled Turkey to stabilize interest rates and the currency and to meet its debt obligations. In 2002-2003, the reforms began to show results. With the exception of a period of market jitters in the run-up to the Iraq war, inflation and interest rates have fallen significantly, the currency has stabilized, and confidence has begun to return. Nonetheless, the economy still remains fragile, and continued implementation of reforms is essential to sustain growth and stability.

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EU
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15. (S) The drive to get Turkey into the EU has widespread support that cuts across political and religious lines, and PM Erdogan remains focused on getting a date at the December EU Summit to start accession negotiation talks. EU Enlargement Commissioner Verheugen toured the country September 4-9 in advance of the European Commission's October progress report and left positive about Turkey's prospects. AKP's passage of major legal reform packages and constitutional amendments have been well-received by the EU. However, implementation is slow and uneven. In addition, the government regularly gives the EU pause with initiatives such as the recent attempt to re-criminalize adultery and fornication and an earlier attempt to permit the wearing of Islamic headscarves (turban) in public buildings. Whether PM Erdogan is pandering to his conservative constituency, competing with Foreign Minister Gul to demonstrate his Islamist credentials, or showing the strength of his religious convictions despite his best attempts to present a democratic facade, is a matter of speculation. Turkey's continued reluctance to cancel its annual fall military exercises on northern Cyprus, as it did over the past several years (and as the Greeks are prepared to do this year), threatens to negate the goodwill engendered in the EU by northern Cyprus's positive April vote on UN SYG Annan's plan to unite the island. Still, most observers expect Turkey to get a qualified "yes" from the EU in December.

IRAQ

16. (C) Turkey recognizes that its national interest is best served by the establishment of security and stability in Iraq and has actively contributed to the country's reconstruction efforts. The GoT offered to send troops to Iraq (an offer we declined) and approved the use of Incirlik Air Base for tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and trained Iraqi diplomats. It authorized the transit of US troops out of Iraq, and permitted the transit to Iraq of supplies for U.S. forces and of humanitarian goods. Turkish companies have been awarded contracts totaling USD 500 million and Turkish exports to Iraq have grown to more than USD 1 billion in the first half of 2004. At any one time 5-6,000 Turks are working in Iraq.

17. (S) Although our macro-interests in Iraq coincide, we approach some issues and events from different vantages, creating friction. Those currently impacting our dialogue on Iraq are:

(C) Trucker Security: The recent spate of Turkish truck driver abductions, and the subsequent murder of several drivers, has become a grave concern for the government given continued overwhelming disapproval by the Turkish population of the U.S.-led effort in Iraq. The GoT recognizes its own interest in remaining in Iraq, but faces a public relations problem over mounting accusations that it is not doing enough to protect its citizens there. While understanding that the U.S. cannot escort every Turkish truck into/out of Iraq, per Ref D, the GoT is asking for our help to establish other security measures, such as the provision of regular communication about the security situation, assistance to establish secure trucker rest stops, and increased escorts where possible.

(C) Talafar Operation: Recent Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I) action against insurgents in the largely Turkmen city of Talafar in Northern Iraq have strained relations (Reftels A,C). GoT concern about potential casualties among the large Turkmen population in that city prompted a request to the U.S. to use restraint in the operation, and a warning that fallout from the operation could jeopardize Turkey's overall cooperation with the U.S. on Iraq. The GoT also warned against any change in ethnic balance of Talafar leadership that would result in greater Kurdish authority. Turkish press reports carrying exaggerated casualty figures and conspiracy theories about U.S. plans to change the

demographics of the area created a highly charged media environment. Perhaps suffering from the fatigue of an extended overseas trip and the resulting information lag about the actual situation on the ground, FM Gul made an uncharacteristic breach of the moderate tone set by the GoT on the issue with a threat to stop cooperation with the U.S. in Iraq if situation continued. Following the Embassy's immediate request for clarification, he walked back from this statement, reiterating Turkey's continued commitment to assist the people of Iraq. Post and Embassy Baghdad are working with the GoT to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region.

(S) PKK/Kongra-Gel: The lack of visible U.S. action against the PKK in northern Iraq remains a source of GoT frustration.

As the number of reported attacks by Iraq-based PKK terrorists continues to mount, U.S. claims of non-military action against the PKK/Kongra-Gel ring increasingly hollow. Recent U.S. action against Iraqi insurgents in Talafar has only underscored to the GoT and the Turkish man-on-the-street (who relies on an irresponsible and sensationalist print media as his primary news source) that the U.S. is willing and able to use force against terrorists when it is in our interest. Turkey maintains some 1,500 Special Forces personnel in northern Iraq aimed at preventing the launching of terrorist acts by the PKK/KONGRA-GEL. In private they have refrained from threatening specific action against the PKK, but publicly PM Erdogan and FM Gul have promised that Turkey will do what it needs to do to take care of its own people. TGS officials have been unusually silent on the issue, although TGS/J-3 Chief LTG Yalcin was pointed in his initial meeting with our new ODC Chief, MG Sutton.

AFGHANISTAN

18. (C) Ankara is positively considering NATO's proposal that the Turkey-led High Readiness Corps (HRC) in Istanbul take over the command of ISAF for six months beginning in February 2005. Turkey previously led ISAF II from June 2002 to February 2003. However, Turkey has two conditions to accepting this mission - a firm commitment by another country to take over six months later (based on the delay it experienced in departing from ISAF II when it took several months to find a successor), and NATO payment of HRC transport to/from Afghanistan. We understand that the NATO Budget Committee is positively considering the transport request. Whether Turkey deploys only a headquarters staff or a more robust force is still an open question, although Turkey's (and NATO's) success may revolve around whether security can be provided for the expected parliamentary elections. Turkey also dispatched three medium-lift helicopters to Afghanistan, bringing its total contribution of personnel there to 220.

INCIRLIK AIR BASE OPERATIONS

19. (S/NF) Cargo Hub: Over the past year, the GoT has permitted increased use of Incirlik Air Base to transit forces and humanitarian goods and supplies for our forces in Afghanistan and the operation of tanker aircraft to support missions to/from both Iraq and Afghanistan and has authorized the transit of U.S. troops from Iraq and the transit of detainees to and from Guantanamo. We have also requested the use of Incirlik as a logistics hub to transship cargo into and out of Iraq and to temporarily base six C-17 aircraft and 130 support personnel, and asked for increased access to nearby Konya Range for Fighter aircraft training, many of which would stage out of Incirlik during their training rotations. Despite repeated inquiries with the MFA, TGS and the Prime Ministry, we have been unable to get a categorical response to these requests. Each ministry has blamed GoT silence on their counterparts. On September 10, MFA Deputy Director General Suna Ilicak allowed that the decision was being made at the interagency ministerial level. She expressed the hope for a decision in advance of your visit. There some speculation that the GoT may try to delay a response until after the U.S. elections in November or the December EU Summit.

ISSUES TO DISCUSS

10. (S/NF) F-16 Basing: Given the difficulty of eliciting a response on the cargo hub request, we expect to encounter significant obstacles with a request to permanently base 48 F-16s at Incirlik, an idea that we have floated only informally in the context of the global defense posture review. To our knowledge, the U.S. has never based aircraft in Turkey on a permanent basis. To gain agreement would likely require modification or renegotiation of the 1980 bilateral Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA),

which provides only for the rotational basing of aircraft under a specific mandate. Renegotiation of the DECA would be a difficult proposition given chronic Turkish complaints over declining security assistance levels and differences over DECA interpretation, particularly related to dependent hires and off-base law enforcement and force protection activities by U.S. forces. It would also provide the GoT an opportunity to renegotiate DECA terms we consider favorable. Turkish officials view all other Incirlik use requests as related to the F-16 proposal, which has complicated consideration of these requests and delayed GoT responses. We are still awaiting an answer to PM A/S Bloomfield's question: Would Turkey entertain a formal proposal if one were made? Our interlocutors have said this is another question for Ministers to decide, but it would still be useful for you to remind your interlocutors that Washington is still waiting for a reply.

11. (C) PSI: Turkey has made an important commitment to non-proliferation with active participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). It endorsed the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles, participated in the Krakow PSI Anniversary Meeting in May as well as in the August Operational Experts Meetings in Copenhagen and Oslo, and offered to host the 2006 PSI Operational Experts Group maritime interdiction exercise. However, continued GoT ire at Turkey's exclusion from the PSI Core Group after Russia was admitted last May is taking a toll. While initially signaling its interest in participating in the October 1 Newport Gaming Exercise, the GoT is re-thinking its representation and considering downgrading its overall level of PSI participation. TGS is likely to reiterate its request for Core Group membership to you. While acknowledging GoT interest in this forum, you should emphasize the value of the Experts Group and participation in exercises and offer full USG support for GoT to host the 2006 maritime exercise.

12. (C) CT CoE: The GoT is prepared to begin classes at the Center of Excellence for Counter Terrorism as soon as this December and to begin full operation in June 2005. According to TGS officials, the CoE is currently about 50 pct staffed. Informally, TGS understands that the USG will offer one 0-6 Navy officer for the Deputy Commandant slot at the center beginning FY 06, however officials are eagerly awaiting a formal USG response to the letter of request for personnel submitted by GEN Basbug to GEN Pace in August. Given the late start date of the proposed Navy official, TGS has inquired whether the USG can also provide an interim official to begin work this winter. EUCOM and JCS J-5 are working on an interim fill solution, which may be a recalled 0-6 reservist. Only after receiving the formal U.S. response will TGS approach other countries for contributions. You should welcome the establishment of this center, confirm the proposed U.S. contribution. JCS J-5's RADM Loren was to give the definitive answer on CoE staffing during an October visit, but his trip has been postponed.

13. (C) Military Procurement: The May cancellation of three major tenders for attack helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and main battle tanks has capped a down year for U.S. defense contractors. While IMF-mandated fiscal restraint may be a factor, Turkey's drive to strengthen its own defense industries and to increase business with EU-origin companies are realities. A tender for the purchase of up to 17 Seahawk Helicopters is pending. Boeing just completed difficult negotiations over the design of its AEW&C aircraft for Turkey. Some good news on the Foreign Military Sales front is the Peace Onyx III F-16 CCIP Upgrade for the Block 40s and 50s. The Letter of Request was submitted to DSCA in June and our Letter of Response is expected by the end of the calendar year. The Undersecretariat for Defense Industry is in the process of trying to buy out Lockheed Martin's shares in the aircraft assembly company, TAI. Post understands that Turkey may issue a new tender for attack helicopters as soon as this fall. However, if the tender contains open source code requirements, U.S. firms will be shut out of the competition. Your visit, as well as the simultaneous DSCA-led Security Cooperation Working Group meeting, will provide an opportunity to gauge the Turkish military's long-range procurement plans.

14. (C) Iraq: We need to encourage the Turks to deal more with the IIG and not to turn to us every time they have an issue in Iraq. You should remind your interlocutors that the IIG is sovereign. We can be helpful in persuading the IIG to take constructive positions, but we can best do so only after Ankara has raised an issue with Baghdad. By increasing its bilateral dialogue with the IIG, Turkey would be helping the new government get used to governing and strengthen the foundation for future, positive Turkey-Iraq relations.

15. (C) Cyprus: Turkey currently has the moral high ground on the Cyprus issue, but growing frustration at the continued isolation of Turkish Cypriots, despite their positive vote for a settlement, could lead the Turks to do something unhelpful. You should encourage TGS and MFA to cancel this fall's Toros exercise on the island.

